

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

# Strategic Plan SFY 2017-2020



Amy M. Jacobs  
Commissioner



## Memorandum from the Commissioner

**TO:** Staff, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning  
Members, Board of Early Care and Learning  
Early Care and Education Stakeholders  
Georgia Policy Makers

**FROM:** Amy M. Jacobs  
Commissioner

**DATE:** June 30, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) Strategic Plan  
State Fiscal Year 2017-2020



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With this memorandum I am introducing the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning's Strategic Plan for State Fiscal Year 2017-2020.

In this important plan you will find DECAL's mission and vision, the goals and objectives necessary to achieve our mission and vision, strategies to accomplish the goals and objectives, and how we will gauge our success.

This strategic plan will help DECAL focus our energy and resources on efforts the department has identified as priorities for the next four years; streamline our operations; and ensure that DECAL employees, child care providers, and other early care and education stakeholders are working toward the same or similar goals.

I encourage you to read the plan carefully, especially looking for areas where you "fit" into the plan and how you can partner with us to help meet the early childhood care and education needs of Georgia's children and families. I acknowledge that DECAL cannot, nor should we, implement this plan on our own. We willingly accept our role to lead the state's efforts to ensure that children are cared for in safe and healthy environments and are more prepared academically, social-emotionally, and physically for Kindergarten.

But, we desperately need the support of child care centers, family child care learning homes, public schools, other state agencies, child advocacy groups, and business, philanthropic, and faith based communities to successfully meet children's and families' needs in our state.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership as we work together for the well-being of Georgia's youngest citizens.

# Vision and Mission Statements



## **Vision:**

Every child in Georgia will have access to high quality early care and education regardless of family income or location.

## **Mission:**

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning enhances children's early education experience to promote their academic, social-emotional, and physical development in partnership with families, communities, the early care and education industry, and stakeholders.



## **Executive Summary**

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) strategic plan outlines the department's high level priorities for the next four years. The plan does not capture all the projects or activities in which the department and early learning community are involved, but rather charts the course for improvement in select, highly strategic areas. After reflecting on past work, submitting the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) state plan, and conducting a careful review of the Governor's strategic goals and the guidelines provided by the Office of Planning and Budget, a team composed of representatives from DECAL's divisions, units, and programs began the planning process.

The process began with an environmental scan, or S.W.O.T. analysis, assessing the department's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. After that, the team revised the department's vision and mission statements and developed four strategic goals, determined measurable objectives, and identified strategies to help accomplish the goals and objectives. The four strategic goals developed by the team are:

- I. Contribute measurably to school readiness for children birth to age five in Georgia.
- II. Increase the number of high quality, affordable child care programs statewide thereby improving access and better addressing the needs of all children.
- III. Develop, engage, and retain a capable, well-trained, and effective workforce for the early care and education industry and for DECAL.
- IV. Build a framework that aligns and coordinates DECAL programs and services across regions for children from birth to age eight.

These goals align with Governor Nathan Deal's direction and goals for the state. By working toward and ultimately achieving these goals, DECAL will contribute to a responsive, efficient, and fiscally sound state government; help lay a solid foundation for lifelong learning in the lives of Georgia's youngest citizens; help develop college and work ready students; and address the needs of all of Georgia's children and their families.

After completing a draft of the strategic plan 2017-2020, the team presented the key elements of the plan to DECAL employees, child care providers, early care and education advocates, and the DECAL board and surveyed their opinions/responses. The results of the surveys indicated strong support for the ideas reflected in this strategic plan. By working together to implement this plan, DECAL and its partners will enhance the quality of learning opportunities and environments for Georgia's youngest learners.

## Introduction

*“Investing in education at every level — from our youngest minds to graduating high school seniors to returning service members and military veterans — has been, and remains, one of my top priorities.”* Governor Nathan Deal, May 2016

Georgia’s strategic plan for the early care and education of its youngest citizens builds on a series of significant steps taken over the past two decades. Long recognized as a pioneer in pre-k investment, Georgia was also one of the first states to develop an executive-level department, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), to serve the early childhood care and education needs of the state’s children and their families.

Since DECAL was created in 2004, the department’s focus has evolved from administering various individual programs to creating a comprehensive system of early childhood programs and services that address the needs of the whole child and family. Approximately 800,000 children ages birth to five live in Georgia, and many of them receive services from or participate in programs administered or monitored by DECAL.

This document details DECAL’s strategic plan for state fiscal years 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020. The plan provides an overview of the department and articulates the goals, measurable objectives, and strategies that will drive the department’s work the next four years.

DECAL’s strategic plan exists within the context of and aligns with Governor Nathan Deal’s strategic direction for Georgia. Governor Deal’s vision is that Georgia have “A lean and responsive state government that allows communities, individuals, and businesses to prosper.” To support his vision, the Governor has identified a set of strategic goals grouped into the following broad categories: an EDUCATED Georgia; a MOBILE Georgia; a GROWING Georgia; a HEALTHY Georgia; and a SAFE Georgia. DECAL’s strategic plan supports the Governor’s vision for an EDUCATED, HEALTHY, and SAFE Georgia. (The Governors Strategic Plan goals are found in Appendix A.)

A team of DECAL staff representing each of DECAL’s divisions, units, and programs developed this plan. The team began by analyzing the department’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). Based on the themes emerging from that analysis, the team generated a list of goals, objectives, and strategies to address the identified weaknesses and threats, capitalize on the opportunities, and build on the strengths. DECAL employees, board members, child care providers, and other external stakeholders had an opportunity to comment on the goals, objectives, and strategies, during webinars and through follow up surveys and correspondence.

# **Values and Principles**

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning has embraced a set of values that define its culture, guide the actions of staff as they do their work each day, and set the tone for interaction as an effective, cohesive team.

## **DECAL Values**

Delivering stellar customer service  
Exhibiting organizational excellence  
Creating positive relationships  
Always valuing others  
Leading the way

In addition, DECAL's work embodies a set of principles that characterize effective early childhood system building. Early childhood system building is the ongoing process of developing the structures, behaviors, and connections that make all the components of an early childhood system operate as a whole to promote shared results for children and families.

## **DECAL Principles for Early Childhood Systems Building**

In its efforts to build a comprehensive early childhood system for all Georgia children, DECAL will partner with others to:

- Reach all children (as early in their lives as possible) and their families with high quality services and supports
- Create policies and procedures that help Georgia children remain healthy and safe
- Genuinely include and effectively accommodate children with special and complex needs
- Reflect and respect the strengths, needs, values, languages, cultures, and communities of children and families
- Ease access for families and transitions for children
- Value parents as decision makers and leaders
- Catalyze and maximize investment and foster data driven innovation

## **Department Overview**

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is responsible for serving the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children ages birth through school age and their families. Georgia is one of three states in the country with a separate education department dedicated to early learning.

DECAL is unique for several reasons. First, the focus of the agency is on children from birth to age five. By creating an independent education department dedicated to serving the needs of children from birth to age five, Georgia boldly stated in policy what research had been demonstrating for some time, i.e., that high quality early learning is an economic necessity that should be accessible to all children regardless of family income or location. Second, the services for which DECAL is responsible range from monitoring child care providers to ensure they are meeting basic health and safety regulations to creating and implementing innovative early education programs and services. Finally, DECAL's success depends on partnerships and funding from many federal, state, philanthropic, and business stakeholders.

DECAL is represented on two important state entities that serve children and families: the Alliance of Education Agency Heads and the Georgia Children's Cabinet. These two key groups are critical to aligning programs and services supporting Georgia's children and families.

Following are descriptions of DECAL's divisions, units, and programs that work to foster high quality early education learning experiences for the state's youngest learners. Key accomplishments from the last planning cycle, 2013-2016, are highlighted.

## **Key Divisions, Units, or Programs**

### **System Reform**

The System Reform division implements efforts to improve the quality of DECAL's programs and services and to increase access to those programs and services for Georgia's children and families. The division was created to administer Georgia's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, which supports the state's goal of increasing access to quality early learning programs, particularly for children with high needs. The division also manages Quality Rated, the state's quality rating and improvement system; special projects to enhance child care subsidy; Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grants; and the child care resource and referral network.

Quality Rated helps families recognize and locate quality child care by awarding a one-, two-, or three-star rating to child care programs that complete a rigorous evaluation process. Quality Rated helps child care programs increase the quality of their services by

providing training, technical assistance, and financial and material incentives. Currently, 57% of child care learning centers are participating in the program, with 22% having achieved a Quality Rated star rating. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of family child care learning home providers are participating, with 14% having achieved a Quality Rated star rating.

The Early Education Empowerment Zones (E<sup>3</sup>Zs) are another key project of the System Reform division. Strategies to improve the quality of early learning and development by fostering community collaboration are being piloted in four E<sup>3</sup>Zs around the state. More specifically, the goals of the E<sup>3</sup>Zs are to (1) increase the availability of high quality early learning and development options for children with high needs, (2) integrate new or expanded initiatives in three-star programs specifically focused on children with high needs, and (3) identify drivers for scale-up feasibility for each strategy.

## **Childcare and Parent Services**

The Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, in partnership with the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS), helps families with low incomes afford the cost of early childhood and school age care programs by subsidizing the cost of child care. DECAL is responsible for administering CAPS. DECAL contracts with the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) within DHS to determine eligibility for new applicants and ongoing clients of the program.

Parents or guardians who are working, attending school, or in job training may qualify for subsidized child care. Annual CAPS funding in Georgia currently totals approximately \$193 million. The monthly average number of children receiving subsidized child care usually ranges from 45,000-55,000, depending on funding.

A new statewide computer-based integrated eligibility system, called Georgia Gateway, is in the final stages of development. The new system will allow Georgia families to apply for programs and services administered by various state agencies and then manage benefits received. CAPS is one of the programs that will be accessible through this “one stop shop.” The new system is scheduled to launch statewide between December 2016 and February 2017.

## **Child Care Services**

Child Care Services is responsible for overseeing approximately 3,000 child care learning centers and 2,000 family child care learning homes in Georgia. A Child Care Services consultant visits each licensed child care learning center and family child care learning home twice a year to ensure that programs are maintaining healthy and safe environments. In addition to monitoring, Child Care Services provides regular, customer-focused licensing orientation sessions for prospective child care programs and investigates (in partnership with local and state law enforcement agencies when necessary) all safety complaints related to licensed early education programs. Child Care



Services also offers technical assistance and training on child development and other topics relevant to early childhood providers and parents.

Child Care Services steadily improved the health and safety of Georgia's child care programs in the last planning cycle. Child care facilities compliance improved from 88% in FY2013 to 94% in FY2015. The department met national best practices for regulatory visits to all programs (two visits per year). The department worked to increase efficiency in operations through data driven management, creating multiple reports to manage regional, unit, and individual performance. A new enforcement and compliance structure, created to align with national best practices and Georgia code, will be launched in July 2016. The department also created a provider self-service portal that allows providers to pay license fees and update information relating to their child care program independently.

## **Nutrition Services**

Nutrition Services is responsible for administering the United States Department of Agriculture's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service (SFSP) for Georgia. The goals of these programs are to ensure that low-income children and adults throughout Georgia have access to nutritious meals while they are in an out-of-home care setting and during the summer when school is not in session. In federal fiscal year 2015 over 85 million meals were served across the state through these two programs. Nutrition Services increased statewide participation in both programs: a 20% increase in meals served in CACFP afterschool programs and a 24% increase in SFSP meals served.

To support providers and other entities participating in the federal nutrition programs, Nutrition Services has created and implemented initiatives including a single electronic application valid for the CACFP and the SFSP; a new claims and compliance system; and new specialized technical assistance and resources to encourage providers and parents to provide children with healthy meals and physical activity. The resources are available through the child care resource and referral agencies and the DECAL website.

Over the past three years, the Nutrition Services division has received additional funding (through a competitive grant process) to work with programs in developing wellness policies. The division has also begun a targeted outreach program to ensure that meals are offered and served in every county in the state. In the next three years, Nutrition Services will continue to expand the wellness program and continue outreach through efforts such as partnering with local library systems to offer meals in the summer and offering local grants for mobile feeding units.

## **Pre-K and Instructional Supports**

Georgia's lottery-funded, voluntary, universal prekindergarten program is currently funded to serve 84,000 slots in over 3,800 classes. Georgia's Pre-K Program is one of the

largest in the nation and continues to be a model for other states. It continually ranks among the highest in percentage of children served and in established quality measures. The program is a model in serving the needs of children with disabilities. Since 2010, the division has offered a Summer Transition Program (STP) for low income children entering kindergarten and, since 2013, Dual Language Learners entering Pre-K. Georgia's Pre-K consultants monitor programs throughout the year and provide high quality professional development and child development expertise to providers, teachers, and families.

Georgia's Pre-K program is offered through a mixed delivery system of public-private partnerships, i.e. in public school systems, private for-profit providers, private nonprofit providers, Head Start programs, colleges and universities and military bases. Recent independent evaluations of the program found that it had substantive impacts on children's school readiness skills.

The Instructional Supports unit supports teachers, leaders, and providers as they increase their instructional knowledge and skills. Support for high quality teaching practices are offered by regionally based Inclusion and Infant Toddler Specialists. These specialists provide training and on-site technical assistance on topics such as implementing strategies to support responsive caregiving and preventing challenging behavior.

The unit designs and offers professional learning opportunities for teachers and leaders. These opportunities include training on using relationship-based professional learning strategies (e.g., Professional Learning Communities, Foundations of Coaching), supporting Dual Language Learners and their families, and using the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS).

The DECAL Scholars program supports early educators in earning an initial or higher degree or credential through scholarships and wage supplements. Other initiatives include the Georgia Trainer Approval System and the Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS).

Significant accomplishments during the last planning cycle include redesigning the GaPDS (work on the system will continue during the upcoming planning cycle) and implementing the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence for Infants and Young Children. In addition, DECAL increased support and resources for families by hiring a Family Engagement Coordinator who helps early learning programs develop effective and productive partnerships with the families in their programs.

## **DECAL Support Units**

The work of DECAL's divisions, units, and programs would not be possible without the support of the following other groups within the department:

- Finance and Administration
- Information Technology

- Communications
- Human Resources
- Legal Services
- Audits and Compliance
- Research and Policy Analysis
- Government Relations

## **Environmental Scan - SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis**

DECAL leaders began the process of creating the strategic plan by conducting a SWOT Analysis of the department's work. The discussion helped identify the needs and priorities for the strategic plan.

### **Strengths:**

- Growth and improvement of the Quality Rated program – strong initial acceptance by programs; strong policies in place to guide the administration of the program
- Implementation of a new technical assistance model by the child care resource and referral agencies resulting in over 700 new programs receiving a Quality Rated star rating
- Strong, consistent support of Georgia's Pre-K Program by the Governor, legislature, and other key stakeholders
- High engagement and increased momentum in the Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships
- Formation of strong relationships across child serving agencies working together on the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant
- Growing levels of community engagement through the Early Education Empowerment Zones
- Financial resources and incentives that allowed units like CAPS and Nutrition Services to expand
- Improving relationships with key stakeholders including providers, families, and the public
- Expanded availability of effective training opportunities for programs including Nutrition Services, Child Care Services, and the GELDS training and resources offered by Pre-K and Instructional Services
- Strong internal processes and improvements in procedures to evaluate results and to identify data driven practices and procedures

### **Challenges:**

- The need for greater efficiency and speed in internal processes to continue improving customer service
- Distractions that come with new federal legislation or regulations that can take over the agenda of a department and disrupt planned activities

- Keeping staff, particularly new staff, trained and engaged with relevant resources to help them provide a high level of customer service and balance competing priorities and also providing cross-training to develop broad knowledge of DECAL programs and services
- The need for increased awareness of and knowledge about DECAL's programs and services among all stakeholders
- Aligning collaborative services and programs to provide the best possible service for Georgia's children and families
- The need to provide additional support for children, families, and caregivers whose primary language is not English
- The need to enhance the use of data and a research agenda across the department

Opportunities:

- Georgia's voluntary tiered quality rating and improvement system, Quality Rated, which relies on support and funding from private business and philanthropic sources to increase the support of quality child care services in the state.
- The Quality Rated Public Awareness Campaign to significantly raise awareness of and engagement in quality improvement activities across the state
- The development of a statewide campaign to help families, providers, and others understand the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS), *Today's Play Shapes the Future*
- The Governor's Education Reform Commission recommendations that included early learning goals
- The new state plan for the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) block grant for 2016-2018
- DECAL as one of seven Early Head Start–Child Care Partnerships in Georgia
- Summer Transition Programs that include lower staff ratios, additional supports for children with high needs, and on-site technical assistance: one program for children about to enter Kindergarten and another for children about to enter prekindergarten (especially for dual language learners)
- Collaboration with the Georgia Department of Education on multiple initiatives including participating in the state's longitudinal data system
- The creation of the Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Z) in 2014 that identified communities of high needs based on indicators including: education, poverty, capacity, quality of early learning, and family characteristics
- A universal service application that will include child care expected to launch in 2016 through a partnership with the Georgia Department of Human Services
- Improved service delivery models to improve customer service across the department and data and technology improvements throughout DECAL to automate processes and improve efficiency
- Stronger branding and communication of DECAL's child nutrition programs to increase awareness among partners and stakeholders
- Stronger collaboration across the education system to create better alignment of services for children birth to age 8

Threats:

- Early Learning Challenge funding time limited
- EHS-CCP expensive on a per child basis
- QRIS validation
- Potential need for more federal funding
- Potential Integrated Eligibility System (IES) delays or unintended impacts associated with implementation
- Potential resistance to change
- Non-compliance/performance of institutions/sponsors on the Nutrition programs
- Lack of viable, sustainable sponsorships in the Nutrition programs
- Reauthorization and implementation of Program Integrity Rule for the Nutrition programs
- Loss of institutional knowledge at state and federal level
- “A few bad apples” determine the perception of the entire child care program population; leads to unfair branding of child care programs
- Barriers to certain rule changes that could create transformational changes in licensed ECE programs
- Unintended or unexpected consequences resulting from foundational changes; must have adequate time to study, research, plan and implement
- Pre-K waiting list; high closure of Pre-K programs
- High teacher turnover in B-5 programs
- Potential concerns from private trainers as DECAL expands DECAL training initiatives
- Accessibility to early childhood credential programs

## **Strategic Goals, Measurable Objectives, and Strategies**

To help ensure that every child in Georgia will have access to high quality early care and education regardless of family income or location, DECAL will focus on four strategic goals in 2017-2020:

- I. Contribute measurably to school readiness for children birth to age five in Georgia
- II. Increase the number of high quality, affordable child care programs statewide thereby improving access and better addressing the needs of all children
- III. Develop, engage, and retain a capable, well-trained, and effective workforce for the early care and education industry and for DECAL
- IV. Build a framework that aligns and coordinates DECAL programs and services across regions for children from birth to age eight

## **Goal I**

Contribute measurably to school readiness for children birth to age five in Georgia

### ***Measurable Objectives***

By 2020, 50% of all children receiving child care subsidy will be in two- or three-star Quality Rated programs.

By 2019, state level school readiness goals will be established using data from year one (2017-2018) of the Kindergarten Readiness Check as the baseline.

By 6/30/18, a method to assess the factors that influence Georgia's Pre-K Program waiting list will be determined, developed, and implemented.

### ***Strategies***

- Encourage all eligible family child care learning homes and child care learning centers to participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Provide incentives to increase the number of two- and three-star Quality Rated programs that will provide services to children receiving subsidy
- Develop a comprehensive definition of school readiness that includes social, academic, and health indicators
- Develop resources and services specifically targeted to support the school readiness of dual language learners
- Increase the number of dual language learners served in Georgia's Pre-K Program
- Increase the percentage of children served in Georgia's Pre-K Program in targeted communities
- Increase the number of Georgia's Pre-K Program teachers who have participated in a Professional Learning Community
- Work in partnership with local school boards and communities to meet DECAL's objectives
- Provide training and resources to early learning professionals on understanding children's developmental milestones and development surveillance

## **Goal II**

Increase the number of high quality, affordable child care programs statewide thereby improving access and better addressing the needs of all children

### ***Measurable Objectives***

By 6/30/2020, 20% of all children receiving child care subsidy will be served through a grant model in two- or three-star Quality Rated programs.

By 12/31/2018, 75% of licensed child care programs in targeted areas/regions (to be defined) will be Quality Rated.

By 12/31/2017, 100% of Georgia's licensed child care programs will be participating in Quality Rated.

Each calendar year, the number of counties where 100% of child care programs are participating in Quality Rated will increase by at least 30.

By 9/30/2018, all (159) counties in Georgia will have at least one child nutrition meal site during the summer months.

### ***Strategies***

- Develop a methodology to identify targeted areas and populations
- Implement and scale up a grant model for child care subsidy to reach targeted areas and populations
- Decrease processing times across all applicable programs
- Increase the number of high quality programs accepting child care subsidy in targeted communities
- Develop effective, coordinated technical assistance models to guide quality improvement across DECAL programs
- Make nutrition education resources available to families and early childhood programs especially focusing on counties with high obesity rates
- Ensure availability and access to CACFP/SFSP in counties with a high rates of food insecurity
- Develop training for providers and DECAL staff on supporting homeless families

- Ensure consistent, intentional, authentic, equitable stakeholder engagement in designing, developing, and implementing applicable DECAL programs and services

### **Goal III**

Develop, engage, and retain a capable, well-trained, and effective workforce for the early care and education industry and for DECAL

#### ***Measurable Objectives***

Each state fiscal year, the number of registered users in the Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS) will increase by 15%.

By 6/30/2018, DECAL employees working in designated program units with over two years of service will be cross trained in at least one other area to build bench strength among more experienced agency staff.

By no later than 6/30/2020, the CAPS eligibility function will successfully transition from DHS/DFCS to DECAL.

Each state fiscal year, the number of infant/toddler caregivers with an infant and toddler credential will increase by 10%.

#### ***Strategies***

Strategies specific to the internal workforce:

- Enhance and expand the existing on-boarding process for new employees (those with less than 24 months of DECAL service)
- Identify positions for which bilingual language skills would be an asset and target recruitment efforts toward meeting that need
- Develop a team of experienced regional staff to act as “DECAL all-program” representatives to facilitate knowledge throughout the agency and to assist with the employee recruitment efforts for the CAPS eligibility function
- Work with DHS and DFCS to transfer the CAPS eligibility function
- Design informational resource tools that provide FAQs and points of contact from each program area to better inform/train staff
- Facilitate exposure to all DECAL programs and promote cross-agency knowledge among more experienced DECAL program employees (more than 24 months on the job)



Strategies specific to the external workforce:

- Target existing federally funded scholarships and incentives for early childhood teachers to address workforce needs
- Use the targeted CCDF funds to incentivize higher salaries more consistent with the market rate for qualified educators
- Increase the number of staff possessing a TCC credential or higher who work in child care centers serving at least 10 children receiving subsidy
- Develop a variance process to increase the number of family child care learning homes earning an initial credential
- Develop or enhance resources to support external communications
- Increase the bilingual workforce within the early learning community

#### **Goal IV**

Build a framework that aligns and coordinates DECAL programs and services across regions for children from birth to age eight.

#### ***Measurable Objectives***

Each state fiscal year, the number of community-based birth-age eight collaboratives supported by DECAL will increase by 50%.

By 6/30/2018, DECAL will have combined or consistent service regions across all applicable programs.

#### ***Strategies***

- Analyze DECAL programs, services, and staff roles/responsibilities to help identify opportunities for cross-agency coordination
- Use POLAR to facilitate data driven communication and decision making between DECAL divisions
- Develop a coordinated research agenda across applicable DECAL programs and services
- Hold regional meetings with DECAL staff to discuss cross-agency issues and increase inter-program collaboration

## **Conclusion**

The SFY 2017-2020 Strategic Plan highlights DECAL'S commitment to continually improve its programs, services, and processes to achieve its mission and vision to ensure that every child in Georgia has access to high quality early care and education regardless of family income or location.

DECAL will continue to pioneer creating and implementing innovative, high quality, state supported early childhood programs. The Department will increase customer satisfaction and provide a higher level of support for Georgia's children and families by building stronger collaboration and alignment within DECAL's units and by continuing to cultivate and strengthen partnerships with external stakeholders.

DECAL's services help ensure families that their children are safe while they are working or pursuing additional education. DECAL's work helps ensure that Georgia businesses have an engaged and qualified workforce. And DECAL's work ensures stakeholders, policy makers and concerned citizens that Georgia is actively preparing to meet the demands and expectations of a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

# Appendix A: Governor's Strategic Goals for Georgia

**Vision:** A lean and responsive state government that allows communities, individuals and businesses to prosper

## Governor's Strategic Goals for Georgia

- Educated:** Developing life-, college-, and work-ready students
- Increase percentage of students reading at or above grade level by the completion of 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade – a strategic benchmark for lifelong learning
  - Increase percentage of Georgians who hold a postsecondary credential
  - Improve and expand science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education
  - Increase teacher and school leader effectiveness
  - Increase the percentage of high school graduates who are college and career ready
  - Empower citizens with public school options and local flexibility for the purpose of improving student achievement
- Mobile:** Transporting people and products in a 21st century Georgia
- Improve the movement of people and goods across and within the state
  - Expand Georgia's role as a major logistics hub for global commerce
  - Leverage public-private partnerships and improve intergovernmental cooperation for successful infrastructure development
- Growing:** Creating jobs and growing businesses
- Implement strategic tax and regulatory reforms that make Georgia more competitive
  - Promote small business growth and entrepreneurship
  - Maximize access to capital for startups and growing businesses
  - Conserve and enhance natural resources, with an emphasis on increasing state water supplies and security
- Healthy:** Accessible care and active lifestyles
- Reduce childhood obesity in Georgia
  - Increase access to health services throughout the state
  - Increase consumer choice and personal responsibility in health care
  - Improve access to treatment and community options for those with disabilities
- Safe:** Protecting the public's safety and security
- Implement alternative sentencing options to improve offender rehabilitation
  - Promote successful offender re-entry and compliance
  - Reduce injury and loss of life on Georgia's roads
  - Promote safe communities and stable families where children thrive
- Responsible and Efficient Government:** Fiscally sound, principled, conservative
- Maintain Georgia's AAA bond rating
  - Increase availability of state services through innovative technology solutions
  - Build and maintain a quality state government workforce
  - Focus state resources on essential services and employ enterprise solutions
  - Enlist community support and public-private partnerships to leverage available resources

## Appendix B: Glossary of Key Terms

Many adults play key roles in children's lives. To be consistent and clearly understood, this plan uses terms in the following ways:

**Children:** "Children" refers to all children prenatal through age five, regardless of developmental level.

**Parents:** Includes mothers and fathers, adoptive and foster mothers and fathers, kinship caregivers (grandparents and other family members raising children), guardians, and other adults acting as parents

**Families:** Children's immediate and extended families, however they define themselves. This term can also include family members who are caregivers (family, friend and neighbor caregivers).

**Early Learning Professionals:** Includes any adult who works in a paid capacity to care for and/or teach children ages birth to age five, and their families. This includes, but is not limited to: licensed child care providers and directors in child care learning centers or family child care learning homes; preschool teachers and directors; staff and directors of licensed school-age programs (usually serving children and youth ages five to 12 years old); school staff – including Pre-K and Kindergarten teachers and teachers' aides, special education teachers, family support workers, literacy coaches, and administrators (e.g., principals and vice principals) – plus early intervention workers, speech and language pathologists, home visitors, librarians, nutrition and health services staff, teacher coaches and mentors, trainers, and consultants.

**Providers:** Includes early learning and health care professionals, depending on the context.

## **APPENDIX C: Enterprise-Supporting Agency (ESA)**

### **Memorandum**

DECAL's 2017-2020 strategic plan includes goals, measurable objectives and strategies for increasing access to high quality early care and education throughout Georgia. While there is no specific strategy that calls for budgetary, technological, workforce or capital asset needs, DECAL understands that there most certainly will be a need to consider new investments in technology and the DECAL workforce in the future. Also, while the plan is heavily reliant on increasing the number of Quality Rated providers and additional state investment for incentivizing participation in Quality Rated has been recommended by the Early Childhood Education Subcommittee of the Governor's Education Reform Commission, the current strategic plan is not dependent upon new funding from the state. DECAL intends to achieve the proposed goals within the current sources and levels of funding and with minimal impact to other state agencies.

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